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Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

Peter Cartwright

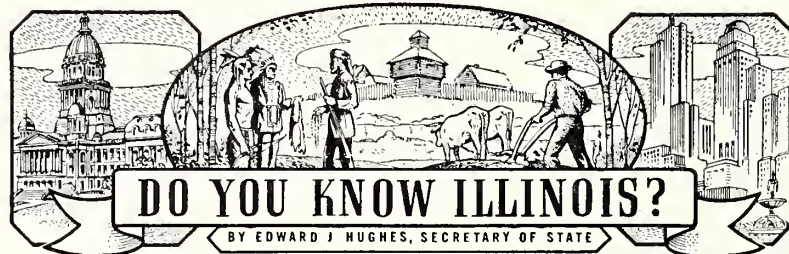
Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

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Release No. 280

DAILY NEWSPAPERS

May 6, 1940



The Secretary of State of Illinois is the State Librarian. The General Library and Archives Division of the State Library under his jurisdiction contain much information concerning your State. Any questions which are of particular interest to readers and which are not covered in this series will be answered immediately. Address all communications: Edward J. Hughes, Secretary of State, Capitol, Springfield, Illinois.

- Q. Who was Peter Cartwright?**
A. A famous Methodist circuit rider of Illinois.
- Q. Where and when was Cartwright born?**
A. Kentucky in 1885.
- Q. When did he start his career?**
A. At sixteen he was converted in a great revival which swept the West.
- Q. When did he first come to Illinois?**
A. In 1823 to explore the country.
- Q. When did he settle in Illinois?**
A. In 1824 he moved with his family to Pleasant Plains.

- Q. What was his reason for settling in Illinois?**
A. His first reason was to escape from the slavery atmosphere of Kentucky and Tennessee.
- Q. In what county is Pleasant Plains?**
A. Sangamon.
- Q. In his career how many sermons did Cartwright preach?**
A. Nearly 18,000.
- Q. How many people did he baptize?**
A. Nearly 15,000.
- Q. In what public office did Cartwright serve?**
A. He was twice elected to the legislature as a representative.

Cartwright, Peter
Filed 6/24/92

John McNamar to W. H. Herndon, Dec. 1, 1866:

Mr Lincoln wrote a first rate Notice of the Rev Peter Cartwright before he left here Mr. Cartwright being a candidate for some office also a political Squib against Mr. Carpenter of Springfield the article alluding to Mr. Cartwright obtained a good deal of notoriety from the fact that Mr Hill rather innocently I should think, signed the article with his own name and published it and consequently Received the Skinning that old Peter administered in a public speech at Salem shortly after, I think Lincoln must have enjoyed the joke rather Hugely, I think you can find the article in the Journal somewhere from 33 to 36.

Caleb Carman to W. H. Herndon, Nov. 30, 1866:

Lincoln once wrote an Article against Peter Cartwright which was a good one the name Signed to it was Diotrefus you may Bet it used the old man very Ruff it was a hard one it was Published in the Beardstown Chronicle by Francis Earns Simeon Francis would not publish in the Sangamon Journal --

Beardstown Chronicle and Illinois Military Bounty Land

Advertiser, Edited by F[rancis]. Arenz, Vol. II, No. 19

(Nov. 1, 1834), p. 1.

For the Beardstown Chronicle.

New Salem, Sept. 7th, 1834

Mr. Editor:

In the Journal of August 30th, I see an article headed the "Valley of the Mississippi, or the Moral Waste, No. 1," and signed "Peter Cartwright," to which the writer seems to invite a reply from any editor or individual.

Now, if I could possibly conceive that this article was written with a view to aid the true religion in any shape, I

should not meddle with it; or, if I could conceive that it was intended to vindicate the character of the "West," I should be the last to censure it. But being thoroughly satisfied that it is wholly a political manœuvre, and being equally well satisfied that the author is a most abandoned [sic] hypocrite (I will not say in religion -- for of this I pretend to know nothing -- but) in politics, I venture to handle it without restraint.

The first sentence in the article that I shall notice is in the following words: "For a number of years past, the character of the citizens of the Valley of the Mississippi, has been assailed and slandered to an extent never surpassed in any civilized country. Now, as to the truth of this charge of slander, I know but little. This much, however, I do know -- that whenever an eastern man becomes a candidate for office in this country, this general charge of slander is resorted to, with a view to prejudice men against him. But I must confess that I have never known but one man fairly proved guilty of the charge; and that man was a western man -- and no other than Peter Cartwright. He was proved guilty in the following manner: --

Some time last summer, the letter to which he alludes in his "Moral Waste," was discovered in the Christian Advocate Journal, bearing his signature. In this letter, speaking of this country, he says: -- "This land of moral desolation." This letter was published in handbill form, and circulated in great numbers throughout Sangamon county, was posted up on

the doors of stores and groceries, and even read in public companies of which he formed a part, and, so far as I can learn, the authorship was never disavowed by him. I have not the letter before me, and therefore cannot make many or long quotations from it; but the short one I have made I know is correct, and I well recollect that the whole tenor of the letter was in perfect unison with it.

The next sentence that I shall notice is in these words: "Who are these mighty men that write about the poor heathens in this Valley?" To this I answer that I cannot say who they all are; but the world has positive evidence that Peter Cartwright is one of them.

Again he says, "Are they not generally found in the ranks of the political and religious aristocrats of the day."

To this I cannot give a direct answer. However, if uncle Peter be a fair sample of the clan, I should say they are.

Again he says, "Is is [sic] it not evident to all informed observers that the devil might get all the poor ignorant heathens in this Valley if they did not get the money." To this I incline to answer yes. I beleive [sic] the people in this country are in some degree priest ridden. I also believe, and if I am not badly mistaken "all informed observers" will concur in the belief that Peter Cartwright bestrides, more than any four men in the northwestern part of the State. He [sic]

He has one of the largest and best improved farms in Sangamon county, with other property in proportion. And how has he got it? Only by the contributions he has been able to levy upon and collect from a priest ridden church. It will not do to say he has earned it "by the sweat of his brow;" for although he may sometimes labor, all know that he spends the greater part of his time in preaching and electioneering.

And then to hear him in electioneering times publicly boasting of mustering his militia, (alluding to the Methodist Church) and marching and counter-marching them in favor of, or against this or that candidate -- why, this is not only hard riding, but it is riding clear off the track, stumps, logs and blackjack brush, notwithstanding. For a church or community to be priest ridden by a man who will take their money and treat them kindly in return is bad enough in all conscience; but to be ridden by one who is continually exposing them to ridicule by making a public boast of his power to hoodwink them, is insufferable.

Again, he says, "Now I put this question to the sober judgment of every Christian and enlightened gentleman, whether this conduct is fair, truthful, or honest? and whether these men ought not to be rebuked by an insulted and abused community?" In answer to this, I should say, that as a general punishment, I think those men ought to be rebuked as uncle Peter recommends: but in his particular case, I would recommend some more sanguinary punishment; for such punishments as rebuke will be forever lost upon one of such

superlative hardihood [sic] and as he possesses -- he has been more than rebuked these twenty years.

Again he says, "Now after these men have come on, settled down in some, flourishing town or growing settlement with their salaries made sure to them, with all their travelling expenses, is it then right to circulate a subscription for their [be]nefit? and after they have appealed to the best f[eeli]ng of an uninformed and abused community, and o[b]tained their money for their national societies and agents, is it then right to slander and misrepresent them?" What, in the name of common sense, is it of which uncle Peter is complaining? He has been quarrelling with -- nobody knows whom -- half down the column of a newspaper, because, as he says, somebody has misrepresented this community by calling it ignorant, &c; when suddenly forgetting himself, he calls this same community an "uninformed and abused community." -- That he should be heard saying things that he does not believe himself, I do not wonder at; but that after his long dealing in duplicity, he should be found unable to travel half way down the column of a newspaper without crossing his own trail is passing strange. Speaking of his Advocate letter in his "Moral Waste," Cartwright says, "I did not ask for Methodist teachers, and when I asked for those under the influence of our own church, I only meant those that were opposed to American or National societies, &c."

If any of Cartwright's real friends have a blush left, now is the time to use it. He did not ask for Methodist teachers! Will any man risk his reputation for common sense by pretending to believe this? Mark the circumstances. He was writing to the editor of the only Methodist periodical published in the nation -- a paper seldomly opened by any but Methodists -- so much so that although the letter had been published some considerable time, and the paper had many subscribers in Sangamon county, so far as I can learn, no eye, save that of a Methodist ever beheld it till the editor of the Pioneer, through the medium of his exchange list, I suppose, discovered it and republished a part of it.

Does this look like a general invitation to all who were opposed to American or National Societies? -- To me it appears a general invitation to particular individuals -- something of a public call made in a private way.

But this is not all -- "These teachers were asked of the older States conferences" -- mark the word conferences. Now I may be mistaken, but if I am not, no church except the methodist has the word conference in its whole technical vocabulary. I will here venture a legal opinion: If asking for methodist teachers were a crime of the magnitude of homicide, none of Cartwright's gentlemen of the bar, could be found able, intelligent and learned enough to save his neck from the halter -- (no insinuations that the said neck ever deserved such a fate.) as I have before said, I have not the Advocate letter before me, neither can I recollect what

Cartwright said in it about American and National societies, or whether he said any thing. I am, however confident he said nothing against them; and I well recollect, he, in terms congratulated the editor upon a late accession of members to the Temperance Society.

A few more words and I shall have done. The sum totum of this matter is this: None has a greater thirst for political distinction than Peter Cartwright. When he wrote his Advocate letter he had no intention that any western man, save probably a few of his militia should see it: but, unfortunately, it was discovered. This was a trying time with Peter. He saw, as any man might have seen, that the effect of this letter was fastening itself upon his political prospects with the benumbing embrace of an incubus, and weighing them down with the weight of a mountain. Then came his "Moral Waste," which is nothing more nor less than an effort to shake off the effect of the Advocate letter. But it is a failure. He will have to shake again.

Poor ghost of ambition! He must have two sets of opinions, one for his religious, and one for his political friends; and to plat them together smoothly, presents a task to which his feverish brain is incompetent. -- Let the Advocate letter and the "Moral Waste, No. 1" be presented to an intelligent stranger, and be told that they are the productions of the same man, and he will be much puzzled to decide whether the auther [sic] is greater fool or knave;

although he may readily see that he has but few rivals in either capacity.

SAMUEL HILL.

[Notice on the back page:]

On the first side of to-days paper will be found a communication [sic], signed Samuel Hill, addressed to the Rev. P. Cartwright. It is inserted by request and paid for as an advertisement. We place such like articles under contribution, in order to prevent a too frequent recurrence.

Glimpses

*of people, events,
life and faith from*

the Church Across the Ages

Peter Cartwright
(1785-1872)

Peter Cartwright: Perhaps America's Most Colorful Country Preacher

Defying Flood

Two men on horseback said goodbyes. "I should not be surprised if I never see you again," said the first.

"Well," answered the second, "if I fall and you never see me again, tell my friends that I fell at my post trying to do my duty."

Illinois was flooded. Not a path could be seen beneath the sheet of water. Treetops, which might guide a bold traveller, stood miles away but would be out of sight whenever he rode into a hollow. He could easily lose his way or flounder into a hole. Even if he reached the trees, a swollen creek beside them would compel him to swim twenty yards. He might have to spend the night on the sopping prairie. The rider paused. On one hand was his duty to the souls of his frontier parish; on the other, serious danger. At that moment he recalled his motto: "Never retreat till you know you can advance no further." He rode forward.



Frontiersman

That decision was characteristic of Peter Cartwright, one of the most colorful frontier preachers in the young United States. Born in Virginia in 1785, just two years after treaty ended the American Revolution, he was taken West to Kentucky. There he became a tough guy in rough Logan County known as "Rogue's Harbor" because of its swarms of badmen. His Methodist mother

pleaded and prayed with him. Her prayers wakened a response. In a camp meeting her sixteen year old son was convicted of his sinfulness and need for a Savior. For hours he cried out to God for forgiveness until finally the peace of Christ flooded his soul. At once he joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. Within two years he was a travelling preacher, bringing the gospel to the backwoods of the new nation. His rough past and hardy constitution served him well, for he faced floods, thieves, hunger and disease. He met every challenge head on.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Fear No Mortal Man

Once Cartwright warned General Jackson (future President of the United States) that he would be damned to Hell just as quickly as any other man if he did not repent. A timid preacher apologized to Jackson for Cartwright's bluntness. The general retorted that Christ's ministers ought to love everybody and fear no mortal man, adding that he wished he had a few thousand officers like Peter Cartwright.

Peter the Pugnacious Preacher

Frequently rowdies disrupted Cartwright's meetings. When one thug promised to whip him, Cartwright invited the man to step into the woods with him and do it. The two started for the trees. Leaping over the fence at the edge of the campground, Cartwright landed painfully. He clutched his side. The bully shouted that the preacher was going for a dagger and took to his heels.

Another time Cartwright charged a group of rowdies in the dark, yelling to imaginary forces, "Here! here! Officers and men, take them!" The troublemakers bolted in panic. Such events gave him a name. A story spread that he had fought legendary riverboatman Mike Fink.

Soulwinner Extraordinary

Crowds flocked to hear him. Throughout Kentucky, Tennessee and Illinois, Cartwright preached to hosts of men and women, speaking three hours at a stretch, several times a week. The conviction in his booming voice could make women weep and strong men tremble. 10,000 came to Christ through his preaching in meetings that often ran day and night. Cartwright baptized thousands, adding them to the church. Several church buildings were erected at his instigation to house services for the new converts. To answer a desperate need for more preachers, he championed the creation of Methodist colleges. Having schooled

himself, he saw the value of learning. Wherever he went he left behind religious books and tracts to convert and strengthened souls in his absence. The joy of soul-winning compensated him for all hardships.

Continual Hardships

Hardships were plentiful. Several times Cartwright went two and three days without food. He once returned from his circuit with just 6¢ of borrowed money in his pocket. His father had to outfit him with new clothes, saddle and horse before he could ride again. Travelling preachers were paid a measly \$30-50 a year with no family allowance. Nonetheless Cartwright married and raised children. His family was not spared tragedy. Forced to camp in the open one night, they were startled awake when a tree snapped in two; Cartwright flung up his arms to deflect the falling log, but it crushed his youngest daughter to death.

A Move For the Sake of the Family

In 1823 Peter Cartwright sold his Kentucky farm. He was disturbed by the effects of slavery on consciences and feared his daughters would marry slave owners. Slavery, he felt, sapped independence of spirit. His family readily agreed to the change and his bishop appointed him to a circuit in Illinois.

In Illinois he more than once braved floods. Once he had to chase his saddle bags which were swept downstream. Another time, in snowy weather, when even he hesitated to enter a flooded river, his eldest daughter, riding with him, proved her own mettle, urging him onward. In every instance, the Lord brought him to safety. He died at eighty-seven, leaving behind an autobiography which became a classic as much for the exploits it recounted as for the picture it painted of frontier life. His courage won him numerous sons and daughters for Christ. He stayed at "his post to do his duty."

Fascinating Facts...

- In 1812 a severe earthquake struck New Madrid, Missouri. At places along the fault the Mississippi flowed backward. Thousands cried out for forgiveness of sins, believing the end of the world had come. Many later joined churches.

- Pioneers, isolated from church communities, often had little knowledge of spiritual terms. One preacher asked a woman if she had any religious convictions. "Naw," she replied, "nor my old man neither. He were tried for hog-stealin' once, but he weren't convicted."

- Because drunkenness was a problem on the frontier, Peter Cartwright thought he'd demonstrate the danger of strong drink. He placed a worm in a glass of wine. It wriggled. He transferred it to a glass of whiskey. It curled up and died. "There," Cartwright said. "What does that tell you?" A man replied, "It shows that if you drink whiskey you won't have worms."

- Francis Asbury, one of Cartwright's overseers, was the first Methodist Bishop in the United States. He travelled nearly 300,000 miles in his life, building the Methodist church from 300 members to over 200,000.

- Historian Nathan Hatch asserts: "Between 1840 and 1860, the Methodists founded at least 35 institutions of higher education. Between the Civil War and 1900, they founded more than one college or university per year. . . . By 1852, eleven of thirteen congressmen from Indiana were Methodists. In 1880, no denomination could claim the affiliation of more governors than the Methodists."

Peter vs. Abraham

Running for Congress in 1846, Peter Cartwright lost to none other than Abraham Lincoln. In 1832, over a decade earlier, however, Cartwright had defeated Lincoln in a race for the Illinois legislature.



In His Own Words... The Price of Being a Preacher



Methodist Circuit Rider

"...in reference to the Methodist Episcopal Church, when we consider that her ministers were illiterate...that we were everywhere spoken against, caricatured and misrepresented; without colleges and seminaries, without religious books or periodicals, without missionary funds, and almost all other religious means; and our ministers did not for many years, on an average, receive over fifty dollars support annually, and a Methodist preacher's library almost entirely consisted of a Bible, Hymn Book, and a Discipline, may we not, without boasting, say with one of old, 'What hath God wrought?'"

A Methodist preacher in those days, when he felt that God had called him to preach, instead of hunting up a college or Biblical institute, hunted up a hardy pony of a horse and some travelling apparatus and...cried 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.' In this way he went through storms of wind, hail, snow, and rain; climbed hills and mountains, traversed valleys, plunged through swamps, swam swollen streams, lay out all night, wet, weary, and hungry, held his horse by the bridle all night, or tied him to a limb, slept with his saddle blanket for a bed, his saddle or saddle bags for his pillow, and his old big coat or blanket, if he had any, for a covering. Often he slept in dirty cabins, on earthen floors, before the fire...His text was always ready, 'Behold the Lamb of God.' "

From Cartwright's *Autobiography*

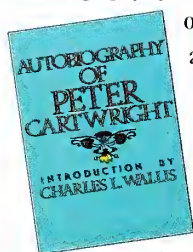
Editor's Notebook

Glimpses is now in its eighth year. For the first few years we treated a single person or subject on a single sheet in two colors. Then two years ago we expanded to the present four page format and full color. The response to this change was overwhelmingly favorable, however, there has been one persistent lament expressed by readers. Many missed the more in depth treatment of the single person or theme that we had somewhat sacrificed with the new format.

With this issue we introduce a further modification of our format that we hope recaptures the appeal of the older approach while maintaining the attractiveness of the new. As you see from this issue we are devoting the first three pages to a single subject, yet breaking it up into a few different features.

More on Cartwright

While riding to a meeting with Professor Richard Heitzenreiter, a Wesley scholar who teaches at Southern Methodist University, I asked him how he aroused interest in his students in Christian history. He told me one particularly effective approach is to have his students pick up the



Autobiography of Peter Cartwright and tell them open it to just about any page at random. There they inevitably find some fascinating anecdote from the life of the great circuit rider that draws them in to want to read more. Hopefully this

issue has done the same for you. Get ahold of the autobiography for fascinating reading. It is published by Abingdon Press and should be available through your local Christian bookstore.

—Ken Curtis

NEXT ISSUE: The next issue of *Glimpses* will look at the author of the world's all-time best-selling book next to the Bible. Do you know who it is?

A NEW SERIES

Landmark Quotes

QUICKLY: How many of the following sayings have you ever heard of? Do you know where they come from?

The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.

Here I stand.

The world is my parish.

*Expect great things from God.
Attempt great things for God.*

You have just dipped into the 3rd, 5th, 16th, 18th and 19th centuries with Tertullian, Augustine, Luther, Wesley and Carey.

Beginning next issue in this column we begin a new ongoing series that looks at such landmark quotations that have survived the centuries. We will select ones that captured an event or an issue, or a turning point event in such a significant way that it was remembered and survived for centuries. The dense forest of church history is strewn with these kinds of sayings. They were remembered because they summed up something important for the church and brought it home with clarity and potency.

If you follow this column issue after issue it will hopefully provide you a mini-overview of the unfolding of the faith over the ages, for we will go roughly in chronological order. Here you will find the stories behind these unforgettable sayings passed down generation after generation.

College Campus News

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New Biography of Peter Cartwright Explores Religion, Politics and Abraham Lincoln

BLOOMINGTON, Ill., Sept. 14, 2005 — Long before the red state-blue state phenomenon, a Methodist frontier circuit rider named Peter Cartwright introduced evangelical Christianity into politics, running several campaigns of his own and even using a famous opponent's "unchurched" status against him in one of those races.

Cartwright's life in politics and his contentious relationship with Abraham Lincoln are among the fascinating details brought to light in a new book by Robert Bray, the R. Forrest Colwell Professor of English Literature at Illinois Wesleyan University.

Peter Cartwright, Legendary Frontier Preacher, published by the University of Illinois Press, is the first full-length biography of the 19th-century preacher, who called himself "God's breaking plough" and is credited for the rapid growth of Methodism in the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys.

Bray's initial interest in Cartwright was based, in part, on the frontier preacher's role as one of the founders of Illinois Wesleyan. But Bray soon found that Cartwright belonged to a much wider context than just American Methodism. He was active in national issues, including slavery, and was, for 20 years, "a social, political, and religious antagonist" of Abraham Lincoln.

In his book, Bray traces Cartwright's journey from his birthplace in Virginia to Illinois, where he moved in 1824 because of his opposition of slavery and a desire to live on "free soil." He remained a lifelong resident of the state.

In Illinois, where clergy were not prohibited from running for elected office, Cartwright became active politically, running for the state legislature four times and winning twice. In an 1832 campaign, he placed fourth in an at-large contest to elect four, thereby defeating Lincoln, who finished eighth.

"Cartwright was one of the first to use his local and national constituencies as a preacher to help him be effective as a politician — first to get elected and then to work for policy," said Bray. "But in many respects, Cartwright stood over on the Jacksonian side of the political fence — very much unlike the evangelical Republicans of today who, though they claim to be interested in things like state's rights, really are more strongly federal in their top-down idea of what the morality of the United States should be.

"Cartwright clearly thought that the Christian Republic had to be based on Christian moral principles and the Bible. But he did not want to reach into every home and tell people how to live."

Cartwright did use the issue of religion against Lincoln in 1846 when the two men were opponents for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Cartwright ran as a Democrat; Lincoln as a Whig.

Noting that Cartwright and Lincoln agreed on many of the issues of the day, including the Mexican War and slavery, Bray wrote that Cartwright had "just one issue to push: religion, or his Whig opponent's lack of it — the very matter that, by conscience and practical good sense, he ought to have avoided."

In his campaign, Cartwright called Lincoln an "infidel," by which, Bray said, he meant that Lincoln "had not been evangelized."

Although Lincoln won the race handily, he did feel it necessary to issue a handbill in which he countered Cartwright's charges, admitting that he was not a church member but claiming he has "never denied the truth of the Scriptures."

"I don't believe that Lincoln was deeply concerned about losing the race to Cartwright," Bray said. "But the mere fact that he felt, in his caution, that he had to put out the handbill shows that he was aware that, even at the lowest level of national office, a candidates' religious principles were a litmus test for office."

Bray also examines the various accounts of Cartwright's later expressions of admiration and support for President Lincoln, especially in his prosecution of the Civil War.

"Whether Cartwright ended up thinking that Lincoln was a great leader and a great man is a real open question," said Bray. "There are fascinating accounts of a speech that Cartwright made in New York in 1861 in which he allegedly defends Lincoln to a group of New York businessmen. But that is the very last you ever hear of Cartwright speaking of Lincoln."

Bray, who is currently working on a new book about Lincoln, said that a primary goal of his Cartwright autobiography was making it accessible for all readers.

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Keywords: jhanna@iwu.edu
Lincoln, politics, religion

A narrated gallery of images on DVD accompanies the volume and is intended as an educational supplement. The photographs of factory interiors are particularly compelling and provide a nice counterpoint to the community orientation of the book.

Despite the overall upbeat tenor of the book, Lane does not hesitate to take his shots. U. S. Steel frequently draws his ire for its civic negligence. On the other hand, Lane takes a largely sympathetic view of the controversial Richard Hatcher administration. The four-term mayor's difficulties implementing a progressive black power agenda are attributed to national forces beyond his control. The coverage of the Hatcher and post-Hatcher years comprises the strongest as well as the grimmest section of the book. Yet while Lane acknowledges the city's problems with crime, drugs, white flight, and physical dereliction, he ably demonstrates another side to life in Gary, one that has included cultural innovation, athletic accom-

plishments, some improvement in city services, and even fresh investment.

Gary's *First Hundred Years* makes it abundantly clear that during its relatively brief life this mid-sized industrial city experienced firsthand the major developments of urban history: the growth of mass-production manufacturing, Progressive education reform, the ascendance of organized labor, the black power movement, and deindustrialization. By putting a human face on all of these subjects, Lane provides an engaging narrative that will appeal to general readers as well as to undergraduates. Unfortunately, the book lacks citations and a bibliography, thereby limiting its utility for scholars. Nonetheless, researchers who wish to further mine Gary's rich yet understudied history will find this volume to be an excellent point of departure.

ANDREW HURLEY is professor of history at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.



Peter Cartwright
Legendary Frontier Preacher

By Robert Bray

(Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005. Pp. x, 314. Illustrations, notes, index. \$35.00.)

A definitive biography of Peter Cartwright has long been needed. Often used as an example and cited as a source, the man known not only as the most famous frontier circuit rider but also as one of the leading

Methodists in early American history clearly deserves more direct scholarly attention. In this volume, literature professor Robert Bray delves deep into Cartwright's place in American religion, politics, and literature.

Bray seems most interested in the preacher's long relationship with Abraham Lincoln. Other writers have noted Cartwright's political, theological, and social rivalry with Lincoln, but Bray fully explores these conflicts in a way that makes them more coherent than an occasional reference. The two giants of frontier Illinois squared off time and again in public battles over religion and politics, but they agreed on some issues—including slavery—and they shared a similar fame as “self-made” men. Cartwright, like Stephen Douglas, shaped Lincoln's career to the extent that he served as a worthy political and philosophical foe.

But Cartwright was far more than just a foil for Abraham Lincoln. Following his conversion to Christianity during the Great Revival on the frontier, Cartwright served as a Methodist circuit rider. Known as the “Kentucky Boy,” his preaching became the stuff of legend and his own *Autobiography* (1856) helped preserve his almost mythical place in American religious history. Always ready to confront sinners in hopes of converting them, he also quickly took up arms against rival denominations and those whom he considered heretics. On the frontier of Kentucky, Ohio, and Illinois, Calvinists and Mormons faced Cartwright's wrath just as often as did drunkards and blasphemers.

One disappointing feature of the book derives from the lack of available sources on Cartwright's frontier

preaching. Bray rightly treats the *Autobiography* with skepticism, since it was written from the perspective of many decades later. But there is little else that details the stories of his adventures as a circuit rider. Bray treats the subject as well as it probably can be, but many readers will wish for more.

Written records do allow the author to analyze more fully Cartwright's work in church politics. Involved in the government of the Methodist Episcopal Church at the local, regional, and national levels, the famous circuit rider served as a lightning rod on many issues. His brash personality and eccentric behavior sometimes caused him embarrassment and the Methodist conference charged him with improper conduct on several occasions. Cartwright's political ambition also created controversy; his practice of campaigning for office while performing his ecclesiastical duties raised important questions about where the line should be drawn between civic and churchly matters.

Considered a moderate on the issue of slavery, Cartwright clearly opposed the peculiar institution. He considered owning slaves a sin and hoped to eliminate the immoral practice through conversion and church discipline. But he also believed that abolitionists posed as great a threat to church unity as did the pro-slavery advocates. In the end, his effort to preserve an anti-slavery Methodist union proved impossible and, despite

his best efforts at saving the national church, the Methodists split in 1844.

This book is well written and well researched. Bray is generally successful in his attempt to place Cartwright in context, although some historians will be disappointed to find expected titles missing from the endnotes. Still, many of the standard texts are referenced and most readers will appreciate the author's engaging style. While

some questions remain, Bray goes behind the legend to show us something of the man who lived the life and helped create the myth.

A. JAMES FULLER is associate professor of history at the University of Indianapolis and has published several books, including co-editing the forthcoming *America, War and Power: Defining the State, 1775-2005*.



The Black Laws
Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio
 By Stephen Middleton

(Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006. Pp. xi, 363. Notes, selected bibliography, index. \$26.95.)

Stephen Middleton's *The Black Laws: Race and the Legal Process in Early Ohio* impressively surveys all legal matters affecting African Americans in Ohio from the territorial stage through the 1880s, although most of the emphasis is on the period before the Civil War. Middleton goes well beyond the title's "Black Laws"—those laws that circumscribed African Americans' legal rights—to place clear focus as well on the issue of slavery in Ohio and most notably the legal process governing fugitive slaves in the state.

Middleton argues that "race-specific laws could not long endure in a country that made freedom and equality the birthright of its people" (p. 4). In the territorial and early statehood periods, the question of whether slavery would be permitted

proved the most pressing legal issue. Although some powerful figures supported opening the territory and new state to slavery, the political mass, including many ordinary folks who had immigrated from the South, opposed slavery. But as Middleton makes clear, opposition to slavery was not the same thing as support for African American civil rights, and the Ohio constitution, while prohibiting slavery, placed several restrictions upon African American residents, including denial of the right to vote. Moreover, by not securing certain rights, the new constitution permitted the Ohio legislature to pass a number of "Black Laws" over the next few decades—laws that, for example, limited black testimony against whites and attempted to restrict African American immigration to the

